

**Amendments to the Claims:**

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

**Listing of Claims:**

1. (currently amended) A method for operating a telecommunications system comprises:
  - receiving, at a first telecommunications system, a telephone call from an external telephone line;
  - determining, at the first telecommunications system, that the telephone call will be transferred to an auto attendant ~~located at~~ running on a remote second telecommunications system, wherein the second telecommunications system is remote from the first telecommunications system;
  - determining a computer network address of the ~~remote second~~ telecommunications system and switching data associated with the auto attendant in response to the telephone call;
  - coupling the first telecommunications system with the ~~remote second~~ telecommunications system at the computer network address;
  - transmitting switching data associated with the auto attendant from the first telecommunications system to the ~~remote second~~ telecommunications system via the Internet;
  - and
  - coupling the telephone call to the auto attendant located at the ~~remote second~~ telecommunications system in response to the switching data associated with the auto attendant.
2. (currently amended) The method of claim 1 further comprising:
  - receiving additional input from the external telephone line; and
  - transmitting the additional data to the ~~remote second~~ telecommunications system;
  - wherein the additional data is processed by the auto attendant located at the ~~remote second~~ telecommunications system.

3. (original) The method of claim 2 wherein the additional data comprises DTMF tones.

4. (original) The method of claim 2 wherein the additional data comprises voice data.

5. (currently amended) The method of claim 2 further comprising receiving response data from the auto attendant located at the ~~remote~~ second telecommunications system, the response data determined in response to the additional data.

6. (original) The method of claim 5 wherein the response data comprises a directory of names.

7. (original) The method of claim 3 wherein the additional data comprises a telephone number.

8. (original) The method of claim 3 wherein the DTMF tones represent a menu selection.

9. (original) A telecommunications system operated according to the method of claim 1.

10. (currently amended) A method for operating a distributed telecommunications system comprises:

receiving a telephone call from an external telephone line into a first telecommunications system;

coupling the external telephone line to an auto attendant ~~located at~~ running on the first telecommunications system;

outputting a menu selection message to the external telephone line;

receiving input data from the external telephone line for the auto attendant located at the first telecommunications system via a wide area network, in response to the menu selection message;

determining a computer network address of a ~~remote~~ second telecommunications system and switching data in response to the input data, the second telecommunications system being remote from the first telecommunications system;

coupling the first telecommunications system with the ~~remote~~ second telecommunications system located at the computer network address;

transmitting switching data from the first telecommunications system to the ~~remote~~ second telecommunications system; and

coupling the telephone call to an auto attendant ~~located at~~ running on the ~~remote~~ second telecommunications system in response to the switching data.

11. (original) The method of claim 10 wherein the menu selection message comprises a directory of selectable options.

12. (original) The method of claim 11 wherein the input data represents a menu selection in response to the directory of selectable options.

13. (original) The method of claim 11 wherein the directory of selectable options comprises a directory of selectable names.

14. (original) The method of claim 13 wherein the input data comprises DTMF tones.

15. (original) The method of claim 13 wherein the directory of selectable options comprises a directory of selectable names.

16. (original) The method of claim 10 wherein the menu selection message is programmable.

17. (previously presented) The method of claim 10 further comprising:  
when input data from the external telephone line is not received within a predetermined period of time, un-coupling the external telephone line from the first telecommunications system.

18. (original) The method of claim 17 wherein the period of time is programmable.

19. (original) The method of claim 17 wherein the menu selection message is determined in response to a particular time of day.

20. (original) A telecommunications server operated as described in claim 10.

21. (currently amended) A method for operating a distributed telecommunications system comprises:

receiving a telephone call from a telephone extension coupled to a first telecommunications system;

selecting a routing identifier associated with ~~an~~ a centralized auto attendant located at a second telecommunications system;

determining a computer network address identifier of the second telecommunications system and connection data associated with the centralized auto attendant in response to the telephone call;

coupling the first telecommunications system with the second telecommunications system located at the computer network address;

transmitting connection data associated with the centralized auto attendant from the first telecommunications system to the second telecommunications system located at the computer network address via a computer network; ~~and~~

coupling the telephone call to the centralized auto attendant ~~located at the second telecommunications system~~ in response to the connection data associated with the centralized auto attendant;

transmitting data associated with menu options from the centralized auto attendant to the telephone extension; and

transmitting a caller input in response to the data associated with menu options from the first telecommunications system to the centralized auto attendant.

22. (previously presented) The method of claim 21 further comprising:  
receiving additional data from the telephone extension; and  
transmitting the additional data to the second telecommunications system located  
at the computer network address;

wherein the additional data is processed by the auto attendant located at the  
second telecommunications system.

23. (previously presented) The method of claim 22 wherein coupling  
the first telecommunications system with the second telecommunications system located at the  
computer network address comprises using the computer network.

24. (original) The method of claim 23 wherein the computer network  
comprises the Internet.

25. (original) The method of claim 24 wherein the computer network also  
comprises a local area network.

26. (previously presented) The method of claim 24 wherein  
transmitting connection data associated with the auto attendant from the first telecommunications  
system comprises:

packetizing the connection data to form packetized data; and  
transmitting the packetized data to the second telecommunications system located  
at the computer network address via the Internet.

27. (original) The method of claim 26 wherein the additional data  
comprises DTMF tones.

28. (original) A telephone system configured to operate as described in  
claim 21.

29. (previously presented) A computer program product configured to  
direct the telephone system of claim 28 to operate as described in claim 21.

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30. (canceled)